

White House Aide Denies CIA Claim

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former White House adviser John D. Ehrlichman Wednesday blamed the Central Intelligence Agency's deputy director, Vernon Walters, for the CIA's role in the Watergate coverup.

Ehrlichman also said he can't recall asking the CIA to help E. Howard Hunt, challenging testimony by former CIA deputy Robert Cushman.

Ehrlichman, who quit as chief White House domestic adviser last April 30, testified behind closed doors to the intelligence subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee. He later gave newsmen a 17-page transcript of his prepared testimony.

Subcommittee Chairman John McClellan, D-Ark., said later there has been seriously conflicting testimony in his

hearings. He scheduled former White House chief of staff H.R. Haldeman for an appearance Thursday.

Ehrlichman's statement dealt with two matters. One was the 1971 burglary by Hunt and others of Dr. Lewis Fielding, a psychiatrist who treated Pentagon Paper defendant Daniel Ellsberg. The other was an attempt to limit the FBI's investigation of last year's Watergate wiretapping.

Ehrlichman's account of the Watergate matter generally supports a statement by President Nixon last week. Nixon said he ordered Ehrlichman and Haldeman to ensure that the FBI's investigations into Watergate didn't uncover secret operations by the CIA or White House agents.

Ehrlichman said Walters and

CIA Director Richard Helms met with him and Haldeman in late June, 1972, Helms and Walters said the CIA hadn't been involved in Watergate and that an FBI investigation wouldn't uncover any past CIA operations.

But Ehrlichman said Walters gave an "equivocal response" to a question about whether any ongoing CIA activities in Mexico might be uncovered. Walters was then ordered to contact acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray III and "give him all the facts."

Gray has testified that Walters told him to postpone FBI interviews with two men, one of them a Mexican lawyer, whose checks supplied a financial link between the Watergate wiretap-

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pers and the Nixon re-election committee. Gray said Ehrlichman interfered with his efforts to straighten the matter out, and that he once warned Nixon that he was being mortally wounded by men around him.

On the Ellsberg matter, Ehrlichman would not flatly contradict the testimony of former CIA deputy director Cushman, but he said he has no evidence or recollection to support it.

Cushman swore Ehrlichman called him around July 7, 1971, "and stated that Howard Hunt was a bona fide employe, a consultant on security matters and that Hunt would come to see me and request assistance which Mr. Ehrlichman requested that I give."

Hunt requested and received disguises, forged identification papers, a camera, a recorder, and other gear which he used in the Ellsberg break-in. Ehrlichman and CIA officials alike say now they were unaware of the burglary until after it happened.

In another Watergate development, the Justice Department Wednesday denied that a special intelligence unit had engaged in active spying.

Sources close to the Watergate investigation said Justice Department agents of the Intelligence Evaluation Committee intercepted mail, tapped telephones, audited income-tax returns and planted informers. The sources said the IEC became "a cover for a secret police operation" soon after it was formed in December 1970.

Wednesday John W. Hushen, director of public information for the Justice Department, said the committee "has never been an operational unit." He said the IEC has a small staff and merely evaluates information supplied to it by other agencies.

Hushen said as far as he knows no one in government engaged in the kinds of spying in question.

The case is a multimillion-dollar series of suits and countersuits between the Democratic Party and the Nixon campaign.